



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

January 2015



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

Jan. 28, 2015

A meeting of the Board of Directors was scheduled at the start and nominally took place, but transacted no business. Directors present included Andy Megrath, president; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Dick Doyle and Sal Clarino, directors.

Aside from the above, Louise Clarino, an associate member, attended.

At the start of the regular meeting, we heard a short presentation from John Campbell, hospice volunteer coordinator with the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice. He is hoping to attract more male and veteran volunteers to the group's current roster of about 80 volunteers, only about 15 percent of whom are men.

Pain management is a key component of the hospice service, which typically serves people during the final six months of their lives, when death is anticipated. Volunteers do whatever is called for outside of professional services, covered by nurses, a social worker or a chaplain, for example. This might include visiting, helping with a garden, giving a caregiver a brief respite or sharing an at-home dinner under the Dinners With Love program supported by local restaurants. Sometimes volunteers take part in "vigil sits," if a person is near death and a family member cannot be constantly present. The volunteers are backed by the professional hospice staff, which make visits and are called in as needed.

Volunteer training consists of eight, three-hour sessions. The next sessions will begin on Thursday, March 19, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. and continue on the following Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. This schedule is repeated for three more weeks, with the conclusion on the last session, April 11. A background check is then given to volunteers. "You will have learned a lot of things about what the end of life is like and how to best support patients and their families and caregivers," John said.

Anyone interested may call John Campbell, hospice volunteer coordinator, at 802-770-1683 or email him at [jcampbell AT ravnah.org](mailto:jcampbell@ravnah.org). Another training may be held in the fall.

There are 40 to 45 patients in hospice care currently in the Rutland County area.

Following John Campbell, Abby Noland, the recently hired director of the Rutland Free Library, spoke to us about a donation of books on the Vietnam War to the library. Many of these have been donated by Chapter 1 member Kerry O'Hara.

Noting that the books stored in the Chapter 1 office get little circulation, Secretary Jack Crowther had proposed donating them to someplace where they might be more visible and usable. After making contact with Director Noland, the two brainstormed a library display of donated books that might be combined with an educational program on Chapter 1 and the Vietnam War.

At our meeting, we showed the director not only the books we have but an assortment of posters, photos, documents and other memorabilia that might be part of an event and display at the library. Here is a rough outline of what has tentatively been agreed on:

There will be a display lasting about a month in the main floor of the library. A display area is being constructed near the center of the rear library area, where the reference librarian used to sit. The donated books, which may number a hundred or more will be on display. Ones the library wants to keep in its collection can be checked out. Others may simply be given away. When the display comes down, remaining books that the library does not keep will be donated to VA collections in White River Junction.

On May 23, the Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend (the federal holiday being Monday, May 25), Chapter 1 will put on a program in the second-floor Fox Room of the library, featuring many of the materials that will be in the downstairs display. Chapter 1 members will speak on topics related to the war, Chapter 1's history as the first Vietnam Veterans of America chapter in the country, and the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park.

Jack Crowther will coordinate the event for the chapter and work with Abby Noland and chapter members on the details. Members interested in helping out can contact Crowther at 802-775-1182, email jack_cr2 AT yahoo.com or email President Andy Megrath at vthogman AT comcast.net.

Once the business meeting began, the members approved the minutes of the November meeting unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$36,514 in the chapter's three accounts. The report was approved unanimously.

President Andy Megrath reported 139 regular members in the chapter at last count.

The Rutland County Veterans Council, a longtime umbrella group of veterans organizations in the county, has disbanded. Chapter 1 received a check for \$250 as its share of the group's funds.

Andy has filed the necessary paperwork with the Vermont Secretary of State to continue Chapter 1's status as a non-profit organization.

John Brennan sent Andy a notice regarding his "U.S. Army Helicopter Names in Vietnam" project. Though the message contained few details, Volume 2 of the project is in the works and will be ready for a reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association June 9-13 in Albuquerque, N.M. Brennan has collected "600 new names," presumably of those who served on helicopter crews, and also is looking for "quality in-country nose art photos." He may be reached at johnmailman AT yahoo.com. The group's website is www.vhcma.org

Sugarbush Ski Resort is hosting the second annual 10th Mountain Division Retreat at Mount Ellen Feb 7-8. As part of the event, Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports is offering free adaptive ski, snowboard and snowshoe lessons for disabled veterans. Unfortunately, the timing of our meeting and this newsletter is too late for the deadline to sign up for that program. Other events are scheduled, including the Second Annual Jared C. Monti Memorial Race at Sugarbush Mt. Ellen.

In other action at the meeting, Sal Clarino moved to donate a subscription to The Veteran, the VVA magazine, to the library. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

We declined to buy an ad in the Vermont Disabled American Veterans convention program this year, because the group never sent us a promised copy of last year's program.

Bob Burke is the new director of Vermont's Office of Veterans Affairs.

Dave Mathis won the \$50 raffle for the meeting. To encourage attendance, the raffle was established last April. Anyone attending gets a free raffle ticket.

Andy Megrath displayed an Advance Directive form, which the VA is encouraging all vets to fill out. The form provides directions to caregivers if a person is no longer capable of making decisions. The forms must be notarized, but the VA can notarize the form for you.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL NOT MEET IN FEBRUARY. THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE
TUESDAY, MARCH 31, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES
AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND. A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL
PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**

VVA Chapter 1
15 Wales St.
Rutland, VT 05701
Address Correction Requested



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

March 2015



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

March 31, 2015

A meeting of the Board of Directors was scheduled at the start and nominally took place, but transacted no business. Directors present included Andy Megrath, president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and George Henry, director.

Aside from the above, Bub Crosby, our chaplain, attended, along with a new member by transfer, Joanne Reynolds of Addison, who served as a nurse in Vietnam.

[Secretary's note: For some reason, most of the meeting did not record. Therefore, these minutes may lack some of the detail of regular minutes. Feel free to correct them at the next meeting.]

At the start of the regular meeting, we observed a moment of silence for Sal Clarino, a career Coast Guard veteran and member of the Chapter 1 board, who died unexpectedly on March 24. Sal will be missed. His wife, Louise is an associate life member. President Andy Megrath reported that Sal will be buried at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph, probably in June. A motorcycle escort from Rutland is being arranged for the occasion.

The secretary's report was accepted without dissent as printed in the January newsletter.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$38,642 total in the chapter's accounts. That compared to \$35,320 a year ago. April starts the new fiscal year. The report was unanimously approved.

John Miner, regional director, for VVA, visited us to invite anyone interested in attending the regional convention in Rocky Hill, Conn., May 15-17 to take part. The event will feature programs on how to push state legislative issues, will provide service officer training, and will present a Veterans Against Drugs program. Awards are to be presented to Dr. Matthew Friedman, senior advisor to the National Center for PTSD, headquartered with the department of Veterans Affairs at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction; and Sen. Bernie Sanders, an advocate for veterans. Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut will also receive an award. An address Sunday will focus on suicide, a special problem among veterans. Events are expected to conclude by noon Sunday.

John said that as regional director, he has budget money to pay for one night of lodging in Rocky Hill, but in later discussion, it was agreed that Chapter 1 can sponsor anyone from the chapter interested in attending. Contact Andy Megrath, who is planning to attend, if you are interested. His email is vthogman@comcast.net.

John Miner also mentioned a meeting he'll be attending May 23 in New Hampshire. Unfortunately, that conflicts with a planned program in Rutland featuring a Vietnam War book giveaway and Chapter 1 historical presentation at the Rutland Free Library.

In other business, a slate of officers was nominated for the coming year. These include the current officers and directors, with the addition of Joanne Reynolds as director, replacing Sal Clarino. The others are President Andy Megrath, Vice President Dave Mathis, Treasurer John McLaughlin, Secretary Jack Crowther and directors, Dick Doyle, Bill Whitney, Mike Divoll, and George Henry.

John McLaughlin moved to nominate the slate of officers. Seconded by George Henry. Passed unanimously.

Anyone interested in serving on the board or as an officer is welcome to come forward and be nominated at the Annual Meeting April 22. Contact an officer or board member to have your wishes known.

In other business, we discussed an outline of the May 23 event at the Rutland Free library. Jack Crowther submitted the outline, which included the following elements:

1. Proposed title: **The Vietnam War and the First-in-the-Nation Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.**

2. Overall approach: Educational. Although this will be the Memorial Day weekend, we will support the May 25 Memorial Day remembrance in the city and other such events in the area as the appropriate means to honor and respect those who have given their lives in military service to their country. The Chapter 1 event will use the occasion of a large book donation to the library to call attention to the history of the Vietnam War and Chapter 1.

3. The program will probably run from about 10 a.m. to noon, including 60 minutes of formal presentations and one hour of browsing and informal conversation.

4. The program will take place in the Fox Room of the library on the second floor. It is handicapped accessible and can hold a sizable crowd. There is room for not only the close to 200 books we are donating but also various memorabilia and displays relating to Chapter 1 and its history. Most of the books will be given away; some are expected to join the library's permanent collection.

5. We will have a number of speakers. President Andy Megrath will be emcee and talk about Chapter 1's recent activities. Having been president for 10 years, he's in a good position to do that. Jack Crowther will briefly present the history of the chapter. We are recruiting individuals for a "What It Was Like" segment featuring vets talking about their experiences.

Following the discussion about the May 23 event, Andy noted that the dedication of West Rutland's World War II memorial, to which Chapter 1 contributed \$1,000, will take place Aug. 15, a Saturday, at 10 a.m., with a luncheon to follow.

Andy reported that he is no longer able to access the Chapter's website to add or change information. He will contact Castleton State College to see if they might, through a student project, assist us in regaining control over the site.

Andy reported that Chapter 1 currently has 140 members and five associate members. On a motion by John McLaughlin, seconded by George Henry and approved unanimously, we voted to purchase lifetime memberships for Danielle and Shaun Tomasi of Fair Haven. They own Tomasi's Bar in Fair Haven, whose sale of so-called "rip tickets" has been the chief source of Chapter 1's income for many years.

Our new member, Joanne Reynolds, spoke briefly to promote the National Veterans Golden Age Games, a competition for veterans age 55 and older. It will be held Aug. 8 - 12 this year in Omaha, Neb., featuring a variety of events, such as golf, table tennis and track, for anyone receiving VA health care. Disabled and able-bodied veterans can compete. Joanne strongly endorsed the event, in which she has participated. For further information, simply do a Google search of nvga2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL MEETING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22,
AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

June 2015



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

June 24, 2015

A meeting of the Board of Directors was scheduled at the start. President Andy Megrath called the board meeting together. Directors present included Andy; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Dick Doyle and Bill Whitney, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, that meeting adjourned and the regular meeting began.

A total of eight members attended, including newcomer Kenneth Buck of Clarendon Springs.

The minutes of the April meeting were accepted as written in the newsletter.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported a total of \$41,569 in the chapter's accounts. The report was unanimously accepted. John also reported the beginning and end-of-year figures for the fiscal year from March 1, 2014, to Feb. 28, 2015. The chapter began the past fiscal year with \$38,642 and ended with \$35,320.

President Andy McGrath reported that the chapter's Annual Financial Report has been filed as required.

Andy reported that the chapter has 140 members, entitling it to three members on the VVA State Council and three delegates to the national convention. The chapter needs to have representation at the State Council meetings or risk having its charter pulled by the council. Our regular reps are Andy, Dave Mathis and John McLaughlin, but other members can fill in. Those attending the State Council meetings get a \$50 stipend for each meeting. The State Council meets four times a year.

The next State Council meeting was to take place Saturday, June 27, at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington, following VVA's participation in a barbecue for the residents.

Andy Megrath displayed his documentation for his advance directive and power of attorney. These are papers that the VA and many other health care authorities strongly recommend be filled out by adults. The documents are designed to spell out how a person wishes to be treated in case of life-threatening and terminal illness situations. In addition, the power of attorney allows a spouse or other relative or friend to exercise authority and make decisions on behalf of another when a person is unable to act on his or her own behalf.

The VA will provide the papers, which are also available online. Go to www.va.gov, go to VA Forms, and then find Form 10-137. There are also documents that explain the purposes of these documents.

Jack Crowther asked about a card he received from the VA offering ear- and eye-testing services. Having recently gotten free hearing aids without a service-connected hearing disability, he asked about eyeglasses.

Discussion revealed that free glasses are now available. To be eligible, according to the recent VA mailing, one needs to be enrolled and registered at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction. Anyone so enrolled and registered then has the option “to directly schedule routine optometry and audiology appointments without the need for a primary care consult.”

The above “pilot program” is offered through the Medical Center and Community Based Outpatient Clinics, depending on the services offered. The relevant phone numbers are: For Registration, 802-295-9363, x5118 or x6281. For Audiology, 802-295-9363, x5247. For Optometry, 802-295-9363, x6364.

Regarding the glasses program, Dick Doyle noted, “Just plan on being there for the whole morning. . . . It’s a group appointment, . . . and you’re probably going to be there close to three hours.”

Chapter 1 members are invited to a ceremony Aug. 15 at 10 a.m. at the West Rutland Town Hall for the unveiling of its new World War II memorial. Chapter 1 donated \$1,000 to help construct the memorial. A luncheon will follow the dedication.

Jack Crowther reported on the chapter’s Book Giveaway and Retrospective held at the Rutland Free Library. The event also coincided roughly with the 35th anniversary of the chapter. About 50 people attended the event, including family members of those the program was dedicated to, the wives and families of recently deceased members: Sal Clarino, Clark Howland, Jake Jacobsen and Edwin Wiehe. As part of the event, Christopher Clarino, Louise and Sal Clarino’s son, presented a check for money raised in his father’s name to the chapter. Christopher raised a total of \$1,100, which he divided between Chapter 1 and the national VVA organization. Interestingly enough, he raised the money online by allowing internet users to watch him playing video games!

Andy reported on the burial ceremony for Sal Clarino in the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Randolph on June 15. Sal, a career Coast Guard sailor, died March 24. Andy was among five motorcyclists that led the procession to the cemetery. The Tall Flags display, part of the Patriot Guard, were present. The Patriot Guard presented a plaque to Louise Clarino, Sal’s widow. A picnic in Sal’s memory was held two days later at Bomoseen State Park.

Andy presented a collection of 11 DVDs that students at Castleton State College had made from VHS video tapes that the chapter wanted to hang on to but have in a more usable format. Castleton State will also provide assistance in revamping the chapter’s website, www.vvachapter1.com.

Vice President Dave Mathis suggested that a worthwhile use of some of the chapter’s funds would be to fund a scholarship. No action was taken, but we agreed to solicit ideas from the membership, via this newsletter and think about it. The award could be made on the basis of a student essay or other criteria. Dick Doyle suggested the chapter might commit \$10,000 for 10 years of scholarships.

If you have thoughts on the idea or want to take part in such a project, please contact Andy Megrath at ythogman@comcast.net or 775-1745.

Andy Megrath won the \$50 drawing for those attending the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**



Vietnam Veterans Of America *Chapter One*

www.vvachapter1.com

November 2015



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

Nov. 19, 2015

REMINDER: VVA is offering a life membership for \$100 through Dec. 31 to those eligible for VVA membership. To get the form, go to www.vva.org. A blurb at the upper left of the web page gives the details and allows you to download the appropriate form.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Dick Doyle and George Henry, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

Besides the directors listed above, those attending included Kenneth Buck of Clarendon Springs, Sandy Hayward of Rutland, and new member Bill Mullan of Rutland, who has joined with his wife, Elaine (Cyr) Mullan.

President Andy Megrath reported that he had given a talk earlier in the day at The Maples housing project in Rutland to the Ann Story Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The DAR chapter not only donated \$100 to the chapter but also gave Andy a cake with the chapter logo on top. Members shared the cake as the meeting got started.

Andy again displayed the "Paper Safe" folder, which the VA is distributing to encourage veterans to have their vital information in one place for the benefit of survivors. The "safe" has forms to list things like VA benefits that survivors may be entitled to and financial information. The VA also encourages vets to execute other documents that facilitate end-of-life decisions, such as a "durable power of attorney" and "advance directives."

The durable power of attorney enables someone else to handle health, legal and financial responsibilities if you become incapacitated. Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to spell out your decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time.

Jack Crowther suggested the chapter might considering partnering with another organization to sponsor an event to help vets fill out some of the above documents.

The chapter still has a number of books to give away. Two boxes were left over after our 35th Anniversary and Book Giveaway event at the Rutland Free Library in May. Any interested member is welcome to come in and select books to read or to pass a box or bag of books on to their local library or other appropriate recipient.

The minutes of the September meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$45,495 in the chapters bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath reported that the solar-powered flagpole light we've had for a year or so has now been installed with the help of the Rutland City Fire Department. Andy and Jack Crowther installed the light initially. The firemen then used a ladder truck to reach the top of the pole and turn the light on after a couple of days of solar charging.

Initially the light didn't come on when covered up to simulate nighttime, so the firemen took the light down and Andy took it home to troubleshoot it. Magically it came on when he laid it on the kitchen counter and covered the light sensor. The firemen then reinstalled the light, and it appears to be working. Though the brightness is limited, it presumably meets the requirement to illuminate an American flag that is flown at night.

Dick Doyle reported on a federal bill being sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and 18 colleagues, including Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy. The legislation is Senate Bill 2251, the Seniors and Veterans Emergency Benefit Act. It would provide veterans and others with a one-time payment of \$580, in light of the fact that Social Security and veterans benefits will not increase in the coming year.

Andy Megrath conveyed the appreciation of his granddaughter, Kyra Dugento, for the support the chapter has provided for a trip to Germany in the spring.

Andy also reported on the changing makeup of the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, which has more members now.

John McLaughlin said an interesting talk is coming up on Wednesday, Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. at the Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury. Prof. Roberta Stewart, head of the Classics Department at Dartmouth College, will give a talk entitled "Reading Homer With Veterans: Narratives of Return and Rage."

In the regular lottery drawing, the winner of the \$50 was Dick Doyle.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, JAN. 14, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**